

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 120733
ORIGIN INR-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-07
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O R 251827Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
INFO ALL EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UR, PINT

SUBJECT: PODGORNY REMOVED FROM POLITBURO

REFTEL: MOSCOW 7291

THE FOLLOWING IS INR'S PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE
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PAGE 02 STATE 120733

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PODGORNY OUSTER (WHICH WAS SENT TO THE
SECRETARY MAY 24):

1. IN A SURPRISE MOVE THE CPSU CENTRAL COMMITTEE TODAY

OUSTED 74 YEAR OLD NIKOLAY PODGORNY FROM THE POLITBURO,
THUS APPARENTLY CLEARING THE WAY FOR BREZHNEV TO BECOME

CHIEF OF STATE AS WELL AS PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY. WHILE WE CANNOT RULE OUT POLICY DIFFERENCES AS CAUSING THE MOVE, SUCH DIFFERENCES APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN RELATIVELY MINOR ONES RESTRICTED LARGELY TO DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. THE NET RESULT OF TODAY'S ACTION IS TO FURTHER ENHANCE BREZHNEV'S ROLE EVEN WHILE POSSIBLY PREPARING FOR HIS EVENTUAL RETIREMENT AS PARTY HEAD.

2. A CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM MET TODAY TO HEAR BREZHNEV REPORT ON THE NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTION TO BE TAKEN UP AT THE SUPREME SOVIET SESSION OPENING JUNE 16. ASIDE FROM

PODGORNY'S ABRUPT DISMISSAL, THE PLENUM, AS EXPECTED:

--NAMED K. V. RUSAKOV (67), RECENTLY A MEMBER OF BREZHNEV'S PERSONAL SECRETARIAT, TO THE POST OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF RELATIONS WITH RULING CPS, REPLACING

--K. F. KATUSHEV (49), WHO LAST MARCH WAS NAMED DEPUTY PREMIER RESPONSIBLE FOR COORDINATING SOVIET-EAST EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

THE PLENUM DID NOT, HOWEVER, REMOVE DEFENSE MINISTER USTINOV (68) FROM THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT, AND HE REMAINS THE ONLY PERSON TO HOLD POSITIONS IN BOTH HEIRARCHIES. AS A RESULT, HIS SPECIFIC GRAVITY IN THE LEADERSHIP MIX HAS INCREASED.

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PAGE 03 STATE 120733

3. IN A MOVE CLEARLY IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS REMOVAL AS CHIEF OF STATE -- AFTER 12 YEARS IN THE JOB, PODGORNY WAS NUDGED OR FORCED OUT OF THE POLITBURO. WE DO NOT KNOW IF HIS HEALTH PLAYED A ROLE, BUT WE NOTE THAT HE RETURNED RECENTLY FROM A LONG TRIP TO AFRICA AND HAS BEEN PUBLICLY ACTIVE SINCE THEN. WE DO NOT KNOW OF ANY SERIOUS POLICY DIFFERENCES, ESPECIALLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, BETWEEN HIM AND HIS POLITBURO COLLEAGUES. HE HAS, HOWEVER, SEEMED LESS ENTHUSIASTIC THAN BREZHNEV IN EMBRACING DETENTE, HAS CALLED FOR EXPANSION OF THE RIGHTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AT THE EXPENSE OF KOSYGIN'S INDUSTRIAL MANAGERS, AND GENERALLY APPEARED TO BE ONE OF THE MORE CONSERVATIVE MEMBERS OF THE POLITBURO. NEVERTHELESS, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE HIS UNCEREMONIOUS DEPARTURE WAS PRIMARILY TO OPEN THE POSITION FOR BREZHNEV.

4. BREZHNEV SEEMS TO BE THE CLEAR WINNER AT THE PLENUM: HE GAVE THE MAIN SPEECH; INSTALLED A TRUSTED AIDE AS A PARTY SECRETARY; AND REMOVED AN OBSTACLE TO HIS RESUMPTION

OF THE PRESTIGIOUS ROLE AS CHIEF OF STATE. HE HAD HELD THE POST FROM 1960 TO 1964 BUT DURING THOSE YEARS, OF COURSE, WAS NOT GENERAL SECRETARY -- OR EVEN ON THE PARTY SECRETARIAT.

5. OUR BEST GUESS IS THAT BREZHNEV WILL TAKE OVER

PODGORNY'S JOB -- WHICH COULD BE UPGRADED UNDER THE NEW CONSTITUTION -- WHILE RETAINING HIS GENERAL SECRETARYSHIP, A DUAL ROLE FOUND ELSEWHERE IN EASTERN EUROPE, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF POLAND AND HUNGARY. HOW LONG HE WILL HOLD

BOTH JOBS IS PROBLEMATIC, FOR BOTH ARE LABOR INTENSIVE. WE SUSPECT THAT HE MAY PLAN TO RELINQUISH THE GENERAL SECRETARYSHIP WHEN THE BURDENS OF OFFICE BECOME TOO TAXING FOR A MAN OF HIS DECLINING STAMINA. WHEN THAT MIGHT BE -- OR WHETHER HIS COLLEAGUES WILL ALLOW HIM TO STAY AS LONG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 STATE 120733

AS HE WISHES, IS ANYBODY'S GUESS. BUT TODAY'S MOVE DOES

SIGNAL THAT BREZHNEV IS AT LAST FACING UP TO THE NEED FOR AN ORDERLY SUCCESSION. VANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Disposition History: n/a
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Format: TEL
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TAGS: PINT, UR, (PODGORNYY, NIKOLAY VIKTOROVICH)
To: MOSCOW
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